

Construction firms fined £36 million for breaking competition law

Following an investigation by the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA), the Northern Ireland-based firm FP McCann Ltd is facing a fine of more than £25 million for its part in the scheme. Derbyshire-based Stanton Bonna Concrete Ltd and Somerset-based CPM Group Ltd are due to pay more than £7 million and £4 million respectively.

The fines have been imposed after the CMA found that the companies broke competition law by taking part in an illegal cartel covering Great Britain. From July 2006 to March 2013, they agreed to fix or coordinate their prices, shared the market by allocating customers and regularly exchanged competitively sensitive information.

These arrangements continued for nearly 7 years and involved meetings attended by senior executives from each of the firms. The CMA recorded a number of these meetings and used them as evidence when arriving at its final decision.

Last year, 2 of the 3 firms, Stanton Bonna Concrete Ltd and CPM Group Ltd, both accepted that they broke competition law by engaging in these arrangements. Accordingly, under the CMA's provisions for leniency and settlement processes, they have received reductions to their fines.

Pre-cast concrete products, such as drainage pipes, are of crucial importance to large infrastructure projects and are often used in roads and railways or water management projects.

Customers for these products include engineering and construction firms, utilities providers and local and national government across Great Britain. At the time of the infringement the firms were the leading players in the market.

Andrea Coscelli, the CMA's Chief Executive, said:

"These companies entered into illegal arrangements where they secretly shared out the market for important building products and agreed to keep prices artificially high. This is totally unacceptable as it cheats customers out of getting a good deal.

"The CMA will not hesitate to issue appropriately large fines in these cases and we will continue to crack down on cartels in the construction sector and in other industries."

The CMA also runs a [Stop Cartels campaign](#), which aims to educate businesses about which practices are illegal and urges people to come forward if they suspect a business has taken part in cartel behaviour. There's also a range of [guidance to help businesses](#) understand more about competition law.

Notes to editors

- The decision is addressed to the following parties, which the CMA has found were directly involved in the infringements or are liable as parent companies of the undertakings directly involved:
 1. Stanton Bonna Concrete Limited and its parent companies Bonna Sabla SA, Consolis Finance SAS, Consolis SAS, and Consolis Group SAS (SBC);
 2. CPM Group Limited; and
 3. FP McCann Limited.
- The final fines for each of the firms were:

£7,474,745 (SBC)

£4,000,000 (CPM Group Limited)

£25,449,676 (FP McCann Limited)

- In calculating financial penalties (fines), the CMA takes into account a number of factors including seriousness and duration of the infringement, turnover in the relevant market and any mitigating and/or aggravating factors.
- CPM Group Ltd and SBC were handed reduced fines as settling parties which admitted their involvement in cartel activity. Parties under investigation may enter into “settlement” if they are prepared to admit that they have breached competition law and are willing to agree to a streamlined administrative procedure for the remainder of the investigation. In return, the CMA imposes a reduced fine on the business where settlement would achieve clear efficiencies, resulting in the earlier adoption of any infringement decision and resource savings.
- SBC also reported the cartel conduct under the CMA’s leniency policy and therefore benefited from a discount on its fine. Under the CMA’s leniency policy, a business that has been involved in a cartel may be granted immunity from penalties or a significant reduction in penalty in return for reporting cartel activity and assisting the CMA with its investigation. An undertaking may qualify for immunity or a reduced penalty where it has a genuine intention to confess that it has engaged in cartel conduct, and provides information that adds significant value to the CMA’s investigation. Individuals involved in cartel activity may also in certain circumstances be granted immunity from criminal prosecution for the cartel offence under the Enterprise Act 2002.
- Anyone who has information about a cartel is encouraged to call the CMA cartels hotline on 020 3738 6888 or email cartelshotline@cma.gov.uk.
- More information about the case is available on the [case page](#).

British Consulate Welcomes Consul General Jo Freeman to the Team



The British High Commission in Canberra is delighted to announce the appointment of Ms Joanne (Jo) Freeman as the British Consul General to Queensland and the Northern Territory.

Ms Freeman will continue as Director of Trade for Australia & New Zealand at the UK's Department for International Trade (DIT), and in her new role will be the senior British Government representative to Queensland and the Northern Territory.

On taking up her role, Ms Freeman said:

I am honoured to have been appointed to this position. The creation of this new Consul General role based in Brisbane is a concrete demonstration of the UK's commitment to strengthening the bilateral relationship between the UK and Australia, in particular with Queensland and the Northern Territory.

Ms Freeman was most recently the Deputy Consul General in Sydney and has previously worked for DIT in various roles including Deputy Regional Director for DIT in London, supporting companies in the London region to export overseas and as First Secretary Trade and Investment in Delhi, India.

You can follow Jo Freeman on Twitter: [@JoF_tradegovuk](https://twitter.com/JoF_tradegovuk)

Published 23 October 2019

Vital new support for young people leaving care

Access to better housing, healthcare and employment opportunities are at the core of a new multi-million pound settlement to improve the life chances of vulnerable young people leaving care.

Marking National Care Leavers Week, Education Secretary Gavin Williamson has today (Wednesday 23 October) announced the new cross-government support available to young people leaving the care system, alongside £19 million of investment into programmes that directly benefit care leavers.

The new funding includes £10 million to create stable homes for care leavers as they become adults; £6 million to support young people leaving care to live independently and £3 million to help care leavers go into further education.

Alongside this, the Education Secretary has committed to delivering 1,000 internships for care leavers over the next two years to help secure long term, quality jobs for care leavers. This will include expanding the existing Civil Service Internship Scheme which has offered permanent jobs to 220 care leavers across Whitehall and working with other public sector bodies including the NHS, Ministry of Defence civilian roles, police and the fire service to support care leavers into new employment opportunities.

Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

Young people leaving care face enormous barriers in their lives as they move towards independence, from not having a trusted person in their life to rely on, to not having a safe home to return to at the end of the day.

Housing, healthcare and education are three of the biggest obstacles they have to overcome. We all have a responsibility to do better for them – so I'm bringing together colleagues from across government to join me in transforming the support we offer care leavers in all of these key areas to make the biggest difference in their lives.

This starts immediately, because we must raise the bar for these young people, to give them greater stability and a strong sense of purpose in adulthood.

The new offer for care leavers builds on existing work by the Department for Education to tackle the root causes for children being taken into care, through projects designed to strengthen families and support stable home lives for vulnerable children so that they can stay with their birth families when it is safe to do so and in that child's best interest. It adds to extra

funding announced last week to help adoptive families build strong relationships and overcome past trauma, and practical support announced earlier this month for foster families in the form of short breaks, mentoring and social activities.

Chaired by Mr Williamson and Minister for the Cabinet Office, Oliver Dowden, the new Care Leaver Covenant Board will comprise of Secretaries of State from across relevant government departments and will meet three times a year to address the key barriers facing young care leavers as they adjust to independent life as adults: finding a suitable, safe place to live, supporting them to remain in education, employment or training, and helping them access appropriate healthcare. It will also look at how to support councils to employ adolescent mental health workers in every leaving care team in the country.

In addition to the new internships and ministerial group, the full package of new announcements includes:

- £10 million to expand Staying Put, a programme designed to create stable homes for care leavers as they become adults. The programme will help more care leavers to continue living with their foster families until they reach 21. This will the stability will boost their numbers in employment or staying in education and make a smooth transition into living independently.
- £6 million in 2021/22 to roll out Staying Close across the country, helping young people leaving residential care to continue to get on-going support from their previous carers they know and trust, which will help them to successfully live independently.
- £3 million to extend the Pupil Premium Plus to all 16-18 year old care leavers, supporting their transition into further education. This is to help them be ambitious in their choice of qualifications and to make sure that there is a greater chance that they will complete their chosen course.

This transformation in support for care leavers will help improve their outcomes, addressing the number of those aged 19 to 21 who are deemed 'not in education, employment or training' (NEET). Almost 40% of care leavers are NEET compared to 13% for this age group overall. The new internships, each being a one-year paid offer, are designed to lead to full-time job offers, and follows an expansion of the civil service internship scheme for care leavers from 2021, which is currently offering 220 internships across 25 departments in the next year.

Expanding the scheme is part of the government's drive to provide care leavers with opportunities to learn new skills in a range of employment areas, whether the police, or other public bodies.

The ministerial group will agree key goals across relevant policy areas which will be scrutinised by members, which will include the Secretaries of State from the Minister of Housing, Communities and Local Government, the Department of Health and Social Care and Home Office.

Minister for the Cabinet Office, Oliver Dowden, said:

My role in the Cabinet Office is to pull together all the different parts of government, so that they work together on the issues that really matter. Through better coordination we can massively improve the support that's available to young people leaving the care system and make sure they can become independent adults with a bright future ahead of them.

Ian Dickson, Chair of the Conference for Care Experienced People which met with Mr Williamson on Monday to mark National Care Leavers Week, said:

The Education Secretary listened very attentively and reflected that our commitment to 'care experienced' people should be a lifelong one – similar to the commitment we make towards members of the Armed Forces. We thought he really got it: care experience is a continuous lifetime experience bringing different needs at different stages that may not accord with the statutory definition of care and leaving care. Care does not end at 18, 21 or 25.

Launch of #BritsInColombia – A little local knowledge goes a long way

The British Embassy in Colombia launches the campaign #BritsInColombia: A little local knowledge goes a long way, focusing on providing practical tips for British people who are travelling in Colombia.

This campaign comes after identifying an increase in travellers and a diversification of destinations in Colombia, due to the peace deal signed in 2016.

Colombia's migration authority estimates there are 3,500 British residents in Colombia, with approx. 4400 visitors at any one time (53,000 per year). Over the past 5 years, there has been a steady increase in the number of British tourists (according to Migracion Colombia Q1 2019 saw a 5% increase compared to Q1 2018).

The profile of our British people has also changed, with most tourists (and consular customers) in Colombia being in the 18-29 age range.

Our Ambassador Colin Martin-Reynolds CMG explained:

We think this is a good way to change perceptions of Colombia, as we believe that if British people come to Colombia and have a great time, without becoming consular cases, they will go back and spread the word creating increased opportunities for investment and cultural links. And for us, building a stronger relationship between the UK and Colombia is our main goal as an Embassy.

This campaign includes a mix of travel and security tips, through which we hope Brits will be able to learn the Colombian art of 'no dar papaya'.

See all our tips here: [Brits in Colombia – Booklet](#) (PDF, 5.23MB, 12 pages)

Also follow us in Facebook and Twitter as @UKinColombia and through the hashtag #BritsInColombia.

[Update to the HASC on Windrush: 22 October 2019](#)

[unable to retrieve full-text content] Letter from Home Secretary Priti Patel to Rt Hon Yvette Cooper MP, Chair of the Home Affairs Select Committee (HASC).